

Critics' THEATRE REVIEWS

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* Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play during the week of November 11, 1940.

† "Beverly Hills" opened last Thursday, November 7th, at the Fulton Theatre.

† "Quiet Please" opened last Friday, November 8th, at the Guild Theatre.

THEATRE REVIEWS IS A COMPLETE GUIDE AND RECORD TO THE NEW YORK SHOWS

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New York Post
New York Herald Tribune

New York Times
New York Daily News
New York World-Telegram

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"Quiet Please"

Reprinted from NEW YORK POST, November 9, 1940

Jane Wyatt in "Quiet Please" at the Guild

By JOHN MASON BROWN

ANOTHER young Lochinvar failed to come out of the west last evening. Like "Beverly Hills" of the night before, "Quiet Please" is a comedy which attempts to invade Hollywood. It may be less hard-boiled than was its predecessor. It may be a wee bit better. But this is saying little; if indeed it is saying anything.

F. Hugh Herbert and Hans Kraly have, at any rate, tried to vary the formula by combining the problems of the film colony at home with those of the film colony at work. The script they have derived from a short story by Ferdinand Reyher, which the program calls "original," is a half-baked attempt at a play-within-a-play. Or, more accurately, at a play within a movie that is being rehearsed.

In other words, the Guild Theatre is no longer supposed to be the home of the Theatre Guild, which is easy enough to believe. For the time being (and it seems quite a time when you are there) every "Hellzapoppin"

trick of planting actors in the audience and aisles is used to persuade you that the auditorium in which you find yourself is a theatre set on Sound Stage 15, at the Imperial Studios. Yes, and, for the benefit of the movie-minded, with grips, juicers, sound men, assistant camera men, etc. In the midst of these scant

proofs of studio activity, a plot emerges like a soap bubble which breaks when trying to shake off its pipe. A great actress, who is so in love with her two-timing husband that she can't keep her mind on the movie she is rehearsing, proves her love for him in real life and wins him back from his philandering by matching his infidelities with an affair of her own. A gasoline station attendant, plus some champagne, of course, and even some recitations from "Romeo and Juliet" are the agents that have led the actress into the problematical transgression which ultimately reunites her with her husband.

Meanwhile it is the elfin whim of the authors of "Quiet Please" to treat those of us out front, who are not involved in the proceedings, as if we were so many "extras." And "extras" we proved to be indeed last night, even if we could summon no applause when instructed to do so, and found that we belonged in the silent films when we were asked to bravo.

Although a plentiful cast and much studio equipment has been assembled for all these labored monkeyshines, the pity of "Quiet Please" is the wastage of time, talent, money, and energy it represents. Ann Mason, for example, pleasant as a breezy star of the prettable days, Gordon Jones is cheerful and likeable as the service station attendant who defies belief. And Bruce MacFarlane, Donald Woods, Anthony Kemble Cooper and Fred Niblo are among the others conspicuously left with little to do that is worth being doing.

The evening's real calamity, however, is that Jane Wyatt's talents are once again squandered. Miss Wyatt is a charming young actress, beautiful, intelligent, skilful, and blessed with a honeyed voice. One of our theatre's sins for which it cannot be easily forgiven is that it has failed to use her as she deserves to be used.

Reprinted from NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM, November 9, 1940

Jane Wyatt's Acting Helps Quiet Please

By SIDNEY B. WHIPPLE

THERE is no need to discuss which came first, the idea for Beverly Hills, which opened Thursday at the Fulton, or for Quiet Please, which came into the Guild Theater last night, for they are eggs out of the same basket.

Quiet Please, like its sorry little predecessor, is intended as another authentic discussion of Hollywood manners and morals, but there is one striking difference between the two productions. Whereas Beverly Hills gave us competent actors playing the part of hams, Quiet Please gives us hams playing the part of hams, and that makes the whole business twice as authentic and, if possible, twice as dull.

Looking back at Beverly Hills again, the Starling-Preminger play seems, in the light of last night's experience, actually refreshing for its simplicity. For Quiet Please is not content to tell a banal little story of intrigue and infidelity, it had to become expensive. It had to take us behind all the super-super props, show us its gigantic cameras and stupendous cranes and blinding lights. It had to spread through the auditorium, overflowing from the stage to the orchestra pit and back to the lobby. And after this mountain of effort has been in labor for two hours, it brings forth a mouse of a plot—something about a movie star who is in love with her own husband. And he is a husband such as only a movie star could love, at that.

Not many of the names in the cast are well known along Broadway, although Miss Jane Wyatt, who plays the movie star, has—and deserves—a considerable reputation. My pre-

vious remark about the ingenious performances of the troupe, which is putting the matter mildly, does not apply to her. Within the limits of Russell Fillmore's direction, she does not only an able and conscientious job, but by the mere lending of her beauty to the stage, makes many parts of the play endurable.

I also liked, with only a few reservations, the acting of an agreeable young man named Gordon Jones, who had less artificiality than common, and who seems to have possibilities. That is as far as the roses go.

There is one little thing that puzzles me. I wonder what it is the vintners sell that goes into those property bottles of "champagne." Two sips out of a modest pint and there you are, flat on your nose or your back, dependent upon which way you fall.

Quiet Please should be filed on the shelf next to Beverly Hills.

Reprinted from
NEW YORK TIMES
November 9, 1940

Hollywood Local

By BROOKS ATKINSON

NONE of this week's plays about Hollywood has been quite so bad as "Quiet Please," which was put on at the Guild Theatre last evening. By exercising remarkable ingenuity the authors have collected in three acts most of the clap-trap of antiquated stock theatre. The drunk scene is in it; also the seduction scene, the balcony scene from "Romeo and Juliet" and the scene in which two theatre actors play a sequence that closely parallels the experiences of their own lives. If it were not for the fact that what is lost is lost and cannot be lost for a second time, this department would have imagined last evening that it was losing its mind. In point of fact, the mind has been missing ever since "Beverly Hills" opened on Thursday evening.

There are some things about "Quiet Please" that are more incredible than the play. In the first place, it has taken the trouble to come all the way from Los Angeles, where it opened about three weeks ago under the management of Jesse L. Lasky and Henry Duffy. In the second place, the beautiful Jane Wyatt, who is one of our home-town girls, plays the leading part. The authors, F. Hugh Herbert and Hans Kraly, have trapped her into playing the part of a cinema actress who is married to a roving husband. She tries roving a little on her own by way of revenge. For the sake of novelty the authors pretend that the Guild Theatre is just one big movie lot and the audience is composed of extras simulating a fashionable New York theatre audience.

Plots of monumental unimportance frequently pass across a producer's desk and slip into the theatre. But this one is also vexed by a complete lack of professionalism in the writing. Although the production is voluminous and keeps actors running up and down the aisles and popping up from among the audience, it is haphazard in style and hackneyed in detail. There is nothing genuine about "Quiet Please" except the profound gloom it spreads over people who love the theatre.

"Quiet Please"

Reprinted from NEW YORK SUN, November 9, 1940

'Quiet Please,' Another Hollywood Comedy, Opens at the Guild Theatre

By RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

THERE is a great deal of fancy wrapping around the small story of "Quiet Please," which opened last evening at the Guild Theater. When this has fallen away, as it does soon enough, a gently familiar love story is revealed in all its pristine innocence and looking somewhat abashed. The assembled authors of "Quiet Please" have to report that, even in Hollywood, true love will find a way.

They tell of a beautiful screen star who is married to a philandering actor and who decides, one night, to teach him a lesson. So she philanders too, choosing a handsome filling station attendant and being somewhat carried away. The authors would have you wonder how far she was carried, but would not have you doubt that the husband learns a lesson and that, virtually a new man, he forgives whatever there is for him to forgive. F. Hugh Herbert, Hans Kraly and Ferdinand Reyher managed to think this one up or, perhaps, to find it in the pages of an old exercise book. Since it is the sort of story which one moderately capable playwright could write with his mind tied behind him, they manage it agreeably enough.

The wrapping is prodigious. The opening scene is laid on Sound Stage 18 of the Imperial Studios in Hollywood and there—we'll have to take this slow and easy—the heroine is pretending to be the heroine of a stage play which is part of the story of a screen play. The real audience is asked to pretend

to be a crowd of extras pretending to be a real audience. Actors trapeze up and down the aisles in a fashion which gave me, a firm believer that actors should stay on the stage, a mild case of "Hella-zoppin" allergy. The assistant director sharply criticizes the audience for not looking and acting like a real Broadway first night audience and—but the further one goes in this sort of thing the more difficult it gets. It was all perfectly simple to me before I started to explain it.

All this amounts to a red herring drawn across the familiar path of the little one about the jealous wife who gives her husband cause for jealousy. Most of the evening is devoted to that, and both story and method of telling are completely hackneyed without being particularly displeasing. It is, of course, a little dull to know precisely what is com-

'QUIET PLEASE'

A comedy in three acts by F. Hugh Herbert and Hans Kraly, from an original story by Ferdinand Reyher; directed by Russell Fillmore; settings by Everett Burgess; presented at the Guild Theater on November 8, 1940, by Jesse L. Lasky and Henry Duffy. The cast:

Tony	Paul Marlon
Betty	Nina Clemens
Mr. Fitzgerald	Michael Ames
Trude	Trude Wyler
Bill Brady	Bruce MacFarlane
Minnie	Evelyn Wall
Jack	Ralph Douglas
Bob Canfield	Fred Niblo
Henry Dakin	Anthony Kemble Cooper
Gloria Weston	Ann Mason
Murphy	Carl Chapman
A Tourist	Oza Waldrop
Fred Matthews	Arthur Hughes
Miss Gurney	Buntly Cutler
Jim Faraday	Herman Lieb
Carol Adams	Jane Wyatt
Roland Pierce	Donald Woods
Joe Mannheim	Charles Martini
Alice	Judith Elliott
Jane	Nancy Preston
Michael Kilmer	Gordon Jones
An Electrician	Charles McClelland
Big	Charles Martini
Julius	Adolph Tews

ing next, up to the very last scene.

It would be far duller if Miss Jane Wyatt were not present, looking as beautiful as all the other actors are required to say she looks, and acting with warm graciousness. Donald Woods plays the husband with engaging directness and Gordon Jones is amusingly stalwart as the lover. Ann Mason makes the most of some of the authors' better lines, and the others in the large cast are diligent and skillful.

It has all been done with lordly indifference to expense and in the most polished manner. It might have been wise, however, to employ one more author, preferably one with a less achingly routine story to tell. It never really pays to stint on authors.

Reprinted from NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, November 9, 1940

"Quiet Please" Makes Audience Crowd of Applauding Extras

"Quiet Please," comedy by F. Hugh Herbert and Hans Kraly. Produced by Jesse L. Lasky and Henry Duffy at the Guild Theatre, New York, Nov. 8, 1940.

★ ★ ★

By BURNS MANTLE

WELL, anyway—they're improving. Meaning these plays that come out of Hollywood hoping to expose Hollywood for profit. "Quiet Please," which Jesse Lasky and Henry Duffy brought to the Guild theatre last night, is what you might call almost-good.

At least it has a story that adds up to a completed adventure, involving believable, or approximately believable, humans. And it is produced and acted by folk who know their way in and out of the theatre and around about a stage.

In addition to which it presents Jane Wyatt as its heroine. And I think it is about time some one was saying that Miss Wyatt stands now approximately where Katharine Cornell stood three or four years after she had scored her first important success in "A Bill of Divorcement."

On Her Way

I shall be very much surprised if she does not follow the Cornell trail, if producers will only stop miscasting her and give her half a chance to play the roles for which the gods created her.

In "Quiet Please" It is F. Hugh Herbert's

and Hans Kraly's idea to dramatize a typical Hollywood scandal rumor. Their heroine is Carol Adams, a beautiful and popular star, married to Roland Pierce, a handsome Class B film actor.

Roland is a chaser. Carol is jealous. Roland goes fishing, with or for a blonde. Carol, in a fit of pique and a striking negligee, consoles herself with a handsome garage attendant. Roland suspects, Carol repents. Sputtery fireworks and finish.

Probably inspired by Hollywood Columnists' Set Paragraph No. 2. And, as you may gather, not very novel or dramatic or interesting.

But, as I say, at least a story. And with Miss Wyatt and the hand-picked Hollywood cast that goes with it, better than a two-star-plus fifty-fifty rating. So we will create a brand new division in our classification table and give it three stars minus.

Some New, Some Old

Fred Niblo, a veteran of the two-a-day and the silent films, is back to play a blustering director with authoritative bluster. There are two substantial leading juveniles comparatively new to Broadway—the Donald Woods who plays the husband and Gordon Jones who is the evening's romance. Both likeable, both competent.

Ann Mason is sympathetic and understanding as a lady who was a star and is a companion. And there are short parts for Anthony Kemble Cooper, Bruce MacFarlane, Oza Waldrop and Herman Lieb.

"Quiet Please" spills over the footlights and tries to draw the audience into the studio set of Sound Stage 18. This audience is supposed to be, Mr. Niblo explains, a typical first-night New York audience, crazy with the heat engendered by the play being seen. Let it act that way.

An old trick, and never very effective, but done with better detail and care than usual. The settings are by Everett Burgess and the direction by Russell Fillmore. Both good jobs, I thought.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE review of "Quiet Please" on next page, (page 226).

"Beverly Hills"

Reprinted from NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, November 8, 1940

You Can't Trust the Wives, Or Husbands, in "Beverly Hills"

"Beverly Hills," comedy by Lynn Starling and Howard J. Green. Produced by Laurence Schwab and Otto L. Preminger at the Fulton Theatre, New York, Nov. 7, 1940.



By BURNS MANTLE

YOU will find a lot of old but short acquaintances in "Beverly Hills" at the Fulton Theatre. There is the well-meaning star who retired from the films to be a wife and mother. And her willing but weak husband, who must succumb to the lure of the amorous wife of the studio's banker to be sure of his writing assignments. There is the gossiping manicure, and the gossip that flows from her; the catty friends and the Oriental help. There is the handsome bungalow and the flowers; the off-stage party and the naming of recognizable names.

But there isn't anything else that can possibly give you a clue to how Lynn Starling and Howard J. Green, the authors, could have thought these ingredients provided promising material for another Hollywood expose, with laughter, even as they wrote it.

Sad Season

It is a sad season for drama, mates. Here we are, the greatest playgoing public left on

earth, hungry for legitimate dramatic entertainment, and the best they can give us is the story of the feverish wife and her reluctant but curious prey.

Given to us in this instance, it is most discouraging to report, by such experienced men of the theatre as Laurence Schwab and Otto Preminger. And Lynn Starling, who at least

has "Meet the Wife" and "Weak Sisters" to his credit.

Ordinarily in the star rating system I generously tack on a plus award to a weak play, if it happens to be well cast and handsomely set. But generosity fails with this entrant.

Violet Heming plays her pretty head and shoulders off trying to be alluring as a blonde menace. Helen Claire is carefully and attractively weak as the harried wife of a dallying scenarist. Like Chase gathers and expels forty sides of her choicest venom and still misses. Enid Markey, in her amusing falsetto, wastes the gossip of the beauty salons on scattered laughs.

Nice Setting, Too

All this, too, in one of Donald Oenslager's handsomest copies of a Beverly Hills nest, complete with off-stage swimming pool and oleander bushes. (They're cheaper off stage.)

A good male cast, too: Clinton Sundberg doing a nice, shy, protesting writer. William J. Kelly a convincing boob banker. Robert Shayne a properly blustering artists' agent.

But, darn it, no play.

Something, I think, will have to be done. Should we picket the Dramatists' Guild?

Perhaps a crowd of playgoers (and critics) parading in 39th St. shouting: "We want drama! We want drama!" might do some good.

But, come to think of it, shouting didn't do the Republicans much good. I guess we'll have to continue to be content just to wait and pray.

"Quiet Please"

Reprinted from NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE, November 9, 1940

More Hollywood

By RICHARD WATTS, JR.

THE drama season's intensive study of Hollywood insect life is carried on with the customary results in the new play called "Quiet Please." Another dismal contemplation of the disordered sex habits of the cinema hierarchy, this frail little comedy by F. Hugh Herbert and Hans Kraly, a pair of hitherto unoffending film scenario writers, was presented in the film capital several weeks ago and was widely applauded there by a number of exiled Broadwayites who must have been frantically anxious to see a play of any kind. There has been an attempt to give the work a touch of novelty by having some of its scenes take place in a studio during the making of a picture and by pretending to regard the audience as extras in a mob scene. I am afraid that this coy device succeeds only in providing additional embarrassment to both the playgoers and the actors.

When Fred Niblo, who was a successful silent film director—he made the expensive "Ben-Hur" of pretalking days—appears here in the role of a film director and approaches the audience, to scold it for not acting its

part well enough, the embarrassment of "Quiet Please" is at its height. It is not that Mr. Niblo is a bad actor. On the contrary, he is one of the best members of the cast. But those selfconscious episodes during which all of us are supposed to applaud enthusiastically and pretend we are Hollywood dress extras, while bit actors rush up and down the aisles in the guise of camera men, press agents and electricians, manage to make every one uncomfortable in a singularly

complete way. For the rest of the time, the play is merely dull and old-fashioned. The tale of a beautiful screen star, whose husband is constantly deceiving her and who has a brief romance with an innocent young mechanic, "Quiet Please" is so clumsily and feebly written that it is surprising that even the exiles from Manhattan didn't forget their witfulness and recognize it for the bad comedy it is.

From the picture they have drawn of Hollywood you would think that the authors loathed the place, but apparently they thought they were writing rather a charming romantic comedy about it. Their mistake, however, makes it difficult for the actors, who must play wooden and annoying imbeciles and strive desperately to be engaging. Considering everything, I think the players are remarkably successful. Miss Jane Wyatt looks beautiful as the unhappy actress and makes the woman as human and bearable as the playwrights will permit. Donald Woods plays the disagreeable husband, and the role is so annoying that you cannot blame him for working to occasional excess in his efforts to let the fellow be terribly charming, too. Miss Ann Mason, as a star of silent days, has a sentimental scene about the era of Valentino, and manages not to make it too embarrassing. The most engaging performance, though, is that of Gordon Jones as the naive lover, who is the butt of the proceedings. I think Mr. Jones is that rarity, a juvenile of talent. The sets by Everett Burgess are attractive. Score on the procession of plays about Hollywood—two down and one to go.

"Beverly Hills"

Reprinted from NEW YORK SUN, November 8, 1940

'Beverly Hills,' a Foolish Comedy, Opens at the Fulton Theater

By RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

THE people of Hollywood may now and then behave a little oddly, but it seems improbable that they are ever quite so laboriously foolish as the authors of last evening's "Beverly Hills" would have us suppose. The authors of "Beverly Hills" are Lynn Starling and Howard J. Green and the play is offered at the Fulton Theater in a bright little setting by Donald Oenslager. Only the setting is bright.

Mr. Starling and Mr. Green have, to be sure, toiled earnestly. They have pursued double meanings with industry and brought them back smirkingly alive. They have drawn broad caricatures of unrecognizable types and sprinkled the names of real Hollywoodians libelously through the script. But, although many members of last evening's audience laughed with carefree glee, I could not detect that the authors had said anything very funny or managed anything very well.

Certainly they have not managed a coherent plot. They tell of the ambitious wife of a screen writer and of her efforts to get him a job writing the film version of a novel called "Land o' Cotton." He, squirming unhappily,

is entangled in the laughably transparent snares of a retired actress who, although predatory in baby-talk, is sponsoring a religious movement which neither I nor the authors of "Beverly Hills" seem to understand at all well. She is also married to the producer of "Land o' Cotton," which adds a complication. In the end the writer asserts his manhood and fires the children's nurse.

No doubt satire was in the back of the

'BEVERLY HILLS'

A comedy in three acts by Lynn Starling and Howard J. Green; setting by Donald Oenslager; directed by Otto L. Preminger; presented at the Fulton Theater on November 7, 1940, by Laurence Schwab and Mr. Preminger. The cast: Lois Strickland Helen Claire Della Enid Markey Jose Peter Goo Chong Art Browder Robert Shayne Pedro Frank Chew Miss White Doro Merande Leonard Strickland Clinton Sundberg Jean Harding Ilka Chase May Flowers Violet Heming A. Trumbull Eastmore William J. Kelly Mavis Burnside Mona Moray Ted Farlow William Talman Policeman Fred de Cordova Geraldine Smith Lea Penman

authors' mind, but if it was it stayed there. The characters are all unpleasant enough to be the butt of sardonic jest, but it takes more than that to provide satire. Wit helps, for one thing.

Mr. Oenslager's setting is ably seconded by several members of the cast. Miss Ilka Chase is present, for one thing, and Miss Chase can do no wrong—except, of course, to get herself employed in the wrong plays. Miss Violet Heming manages to play one of the silliest parts of some years with professional dignity and skill and Miss Helen Claire does well enough. Clinton Sundberg, Robert Shayne and several of the others do more than the authors have a right to ask. On the basis of "Beverly Hills," they haven't a right to ask much.

Reprinted from NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM, November 8, 1940

Beverly Hills Is Satire on Life in Hollywood

By SIDNEY B. WHIPPLE

BEVERLY HILLS, the new play that opened last night at the Fulton Theater, purports to be a satire, perhaps a caricature, of Hollywood. As to the authenticity of its atmosphere—which is foggy and blue—this column will not pretend to judge. Certainly it follows the general picture drawn by our spicier scandal sheets. It makes free use of names such as Zanuck and Jack Oakie and Louella Parsons and Elsa Maxwell. It mixes stars and producers and writers and 10-centers in a midnight brawl. It admits to considerable anastory exercise in the oleander bushes and hints of high jinks in boudoirs.

But, thick as this atmosphere may be, there is no more substance to the play than might be picked up by a hurried glance through the above-mentioned gossip magazines.

The careless infidelity, marital and commercial, that pervades the story, is not particularly annoying and scarcely important. The bad manners, the gross carnality, the jealousies and greed, the humbug of its executives, all are of the old and familiar pattern. And right there is the fault of this play by Lynn Starling and Otto L. Preminger. It is too old and too familiar.

I wish, for example, that there might have been one redeeming character in the whole play for the lack of virtue in all the others. Or is everybody in Hollywood that way?

One of the central figures, to be specific, is a one-time star of the silent movies, now married to a magnate, who sweetly relates a train of seductions reaching from Rome to Los Angeles. Her husband is a crook and an ignoramus. Her greatest friend is the wife of her latest victim. This wife, in turn, is a woman of vaulting ambition who cares nothing about the methods by which success for her writer-husband can be attained so long as it is attained. Her only visible female friend is a sardonic, back-biting, double-crossing wife of still another writer—who happily never makes an appearance, since he is always busy off-stage in the embraces alternately of Bacchus and Venus.

These far from engaging human beings are

somehow bound together by a conscienceless agent who, with the exception of three servants and a policeman, completes the disagreeable group.

The play abounds in double-entendres, with excessive play upon the words "creative ability," which may give you a vague idea of its standard of wit.

As has been the case with so many other plays this year, the cast provided by Producers Laurence Schwab and Dr. Preminger is altogether too good for the sort of a thing. Helen Claire, the sterling child of the Confederacy in *Kiss the Boys Goodbye*, is its heroine and she plays the role with much of the zest, enthusiasm and charm that made her a name in the *Clare Boothe* comedy. Ilka Chase returns to Broadway as slender as though she had not eaten all those Saturday radio luncheons, and gives a performance that is as perfect in its cattiness as that she had in *The Women*.

There were two superlative comedy characterizations. One was that of Enid Markey, as the community harrassing gossip, continuing proof that Miss Markey is one of our most gifted comedienne. The other was that of Doro Merande, who convulsed us as the wife of the Okie in *Love's Old Sweet Song*, and who now gives her solemn, dead-pan humor to the part of a long-suffering nurse to a pair of Hollywood brats.

As to Violet Heming, I am frankly puzzled. She has always been one of this department's favorite actresses. Yet, although the exceedingly foolish lines she is given may be responsible, I could not understand the purpose of what seemed to be deliberate overacting. The exaggeration that the authors have written into the part needs toning down rather than emphasis.

Clinton Sundberg, the excellent and expert William J. Kelly, and Robert Shayne were of great assistance, and Donald Oenslager's setting was delightful and, so far as I know, authentic.

As for the play itself, I'm afraid it has to go into the ho-hum department.